



United States Mission to the OSCE

Prevention of Discrimination Conferences Conclusion

**Statement of Rabbi Andrew Baker
U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Implementation Meeting
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It is the view of the United States that both the Conference on Anti-Semitism and the Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination helped raise awareness of these critical, yet distinct, human rights issues. We thank the Chair-in-Office for organizing the two conferences, each designed to address the relevant problems and challenges that we confront today. However, we cannot claim success from the mere fact that they were held. Rather, the true measure of their worth will lie in what tangible results emerge from them. In short, we hope that both conferences will serve as catalysts to help focus and strengthen OSCE efforts in these important areas.

Participating States and OSCE institutions have an essential commitment to combat and speak out against human rights abuses, regardless of the victim's race, creed or nationality. In recent years the OSCE has come to recognize the value of also addressing problems of intolerance in a singular and targeted fashion. We all recognized the merits in organizing the April Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Roma and Sinti and the July Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion and Belief. This flexibility to move from topic to topic, as the need arises, is one of the OSCE's greatest assets.

Considering the unique history and recent manifestations of anti-Semitism and related violence in the OSCE region, it is incumbent that this Organization maintain a distinct focus on this problem. Therefore, we have offered several recommendations that are specific to combating anti-Semitism. These include the comprehensive collection of data and its analysis, and the development of Holocaust education programs and participation in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education. In particular, we commend the German Government for its commitment to host an OSCE follow-up meeting in Berlin in June 2004 devoted specifically to anti-Semitism. This would provide the necessary forum to evaluate the various national and intergovernmental efforts and programs that are intended to combat the problem. It is our hope that all participating States will also voice support for the German initiative, as a tangible expression of the OSCE's continuing focus on anti-Semitism. We thank those nations that have already done so. The United States would like to see a decision at the Maastricht Ministerial meetings in December endorsing a 2004 Berlin follow-up conference as an official OSCE event on anti-Semitism, as well as supporting our other recommendations.

Our recommendations specific to combating Racism and Xenophobia include: calling on the OSCE to instruct the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and/or the High Commissioner on National Minorities to collect data on anti-discrimination educational policies, including those that govern access to education, that have been implemented by OSCE participating States. We also hope our recommendation for the establishment of civil and human rights commissions at local and national levels will be accepted. The United States also recommends that a follow-up

conference, hosted by another OSCE participating State, be held next year to discuss the progress made in combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination and that a decision to this effect also be taken in Maastricht.

It is, of course, evident that some strategies for dealing with these two distinct problems are similar and lend themselves to common recommendations. Surely, the process of collecting statistics on hate crimes is itself a single operation, provided that anti-Semitic incidents are duly noted. At the 1991 Meeting of Experts on National Minorities in Geneva the OSCE participating States agreed to improve the enforcement of laws against hate-related crimes by collecting, publishing and making available to the public data about crimes that are based on prejudice as to race, ethnic identity or religion, including the guidelines used for the collection of such data. Several subsequent summits have built on these commitments. It is time we take more deliberate action to fulfill these agreements. To this end, the Ministerial Council should also call for all OSCE participating States to inform the ODIHR of what legislation they have in place to penalize and punish the perpetrators of anti-Semitic violence and other hate crimes. The ODIHR should assist participating States with drafting legislation and on the collection of hate-crime statistics. Where statistics are already available, participating States should share that information with ODIHR and other States. OSCE participating States should use appropriate OSCE meetings to discuss these statistics. Participating States should also use these statistics to develop, as appropriate, targeted OSCE programs and projects.

In closing, the U.S. would again like to thank the Dutch Chair for the leadership that has been brought to addressing these issues. The problems of anti-Semitism, of racism, xenophobia and discrimination have been with us since the dawn of time. Despite the progress that humankind has made in so many areas, we are often in danger of despair that these problems will never be solved. Therefore, the OSCE should take pride in the positive contributions that have been made during this past year and that, we trust, will continue.

We look forward to working closely with the incoming Bulgarian Chair-in-Office to encourage the participating States to maintain the sharp focus on the issues considered at the Vienna Conferences with the aim of implementing all relevant commitments. In the darkest period of the last century, Bulgaria stood nearly alone in preventing the terrible crimes of that era from occurring within its borders. Mindful of this special chapter in its history, Bulgaria is well-suited to lead in this ongoing struggle.